

The City of Fresno
Draft Master Environmental Impact Report
for the 2025 Fresno General Plan
EIR No. 10130
SCH Log No. 2001071097

Chapter IX – Alternatives

Section 15126.6 of the CEQA Guidelines states that “an EIR shall describe a range of reasonable alternatives to the project...which would feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the project [note: these are presented as ‘Project Objectives’ in Chapter III of this MEIR] but would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the project, and evaluate the comparative merits of the alternatives...there is no ironclad rule governing the nature or scope of the alternatives to be discussed other than the rule of reason.”

This Chapter presents the comparative evaluation required by CEQA. Table IX-1 presents a qualitative comparison of environmental impacts between each Alternative, as compared to the Preferred Project, which is the Draft 2025 Fresno General Plan. Further information is presented below.

A. ALTERNATIVE 1 – NO PROJECT (SEE FIGURE III-2)

This Alternative represents the “no project” alternative, as described in Section 15126.6 (e) of the CEQA Guidelines. The No Project Alternative represents the City of Fresno’s General Plan, which was in effect on January 1, 2002. From a pragmatic perspective, Alternative 1 must assume the full development of the Copper River project under the County’s jurisdiction, since the Fresno County Board of Supervisors has already approved the project. The population holding capacity is approximately 670,000.

In general, Alternative 1 is likely to lead to lesser disturbance to natural resources and less demand on urban resources and public services, compared to the 2025 Fresno General Plan. These decreased impacts are related to an overall smaller population buildout, and a smaller area disturbed (i.e., the Southeast Growth Area would not be included).

B. ALTERNATIVE 2 – INTENSIFIED DEVELOPMENT WITHIN PRESENT GENERAL PLAN BOUNDARIES (SEE FIGURE III-3)

This Alternative assumes approximately the same population holding capacity (eg.,790,000) as the proposed 2025 Fresno General Plan, but it concentrates that population within the present General Plan boundaries, in effect as of January 2002.

In general, Alternative 2 would have similar impacts to the 2025 Fresno General Plan. There may be more traffic congestion projected on Blackstone Avenue and surrounding streets, due to concentration of population and commercial uses in that corridor. However, there would be less impacts to Agriculture, Biology, and Cultural Resources, due to a smaller area to be developed (i.e., the Southeast Growth Area would not be included).

C. ALTERNATIVE 3 – REDUCED INTENSITY GENERAL PLAN (SEE FIGURE III-4)

This Alternative is “environmentally superior” to the proposed 2025 Fresno General Plan in that certain significant environmental effects are reduced. The boundaries of this Alternative are the same as the 2025 Fresno General Plan, but the population holding capacity has been reduced to approximately 542,590.

In general, Alternative 2 would have substantially fewer environmental impacts than the 2025 Fresno General Plan, corresponding to a population buildout that is not significantly greater than the present-day population. On the other hand, the growth that would not be accommodated by this Alternative may be directed to the unincorporated areas of Fresno and Madera Counties and/or other cities in the region, leading to unanticipated environmental consequences in those communities.

D. ALTERNATIVE 4 – MODIFICATIONS TO THE PROPOSED PROJECT (SEE FIGURE III-5)

This alternative includes three land use plan modifications to the preferred alternative or proposed project which is the 2025 Fresno General Plan. These modifications, proposed by entities representing private property interests, have been previously described in Chapter III, Section E, of the draft EIR and Appendix C of the draft 2025 Fresno General Plan document. The location and configuration of these proposed alternative land uses are depicted by Figure III-5 (Sheets 1 to 4). These alternative land use proposals generally propose potentially more intensive planned land uses than the proposed general plan but are widely dispersed within the project's boundaries with Modification No. 1 (23.6 acres) located in the northeast, Modification No. 2 (75 acres) located in the northwest and Modification No. 3 (52 acres) located in the southeast.

In total the three modifications would increase the amount of land acreage devoted to commercial use and increase the density of the remaining areas designated for residential uses. The proposed increase in the planned residential density would result in a projected population capacity increase of approximately 565 people (1,932 versus 1,367). In addition to this population increase, the proposed plan modifications would increase the amount of retail commercial uses with 23 acres located in the southeast area and 75 acres in the northwest area. While substantial areas planned commercial uses have been designated for future development within the northwest and southeast portions of the metropolitan area by the draft plan, the proposed modifications were examined based upon the assumption that additional intensive commercial development would occur as proposed by the plan modifications.

The proposed modifications have been evaluated and compared to the environmental impacts of the planned uses of the 2025 Fresno General Plan. This comparison is summarized by Table IX-1. Based upon the comparative, the proposed modifications would have moderate increased impact upon public facilities and services. A more substantial impact would occur with respect to the generation of vehicular traffic and the reduction of the level of service provided by the planned major streets surrounding the proposed modification sites.

Daily vehicle trips generated by each of the proposed land uses was projected based upon Institute of Traffic Engineering (ITE) guidelines and distributed to the major street system surrounding the modification sites. These vehicle trips were added to the average daily vehicle trips assigned to major street segments by the COG computer traffic model (TP+/Viper) used for general plan analysis purposes. This analysis indicates that vehicle trips on the surrounding major street system will increase and in some cases exacerbate an already substandard level of service projected for street segments. Major street segments projected to function at a substandard level of service (LOS) E or F with completion of planned travel lane improvements may experience increased congestion during peak traffic periods with development of the proposed land use modifications. For any of the alternative land uses that might be approved, a future development application will require the submission of a project specific traffic and transportation evaluation to determine corresponding access, street capacity and transportation improvements consistent with the mitigation measures identified by Section V-B.

TABLE IX-1: COMPARISON OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS UPON GENERAL PLAN ALTERNATIVES

Impacts	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3	Alternative 4	Comment
Projected Population and Housing	less	same	less	same	Alt. 3 assumes substantially lower buildout than the 2025 Fresno General Plan. Alt. 4 includes both increases and decreases in population.
Increased Transportation and Circulation Impacts	less	more	less	more	Alts. 1 and 3 assume lower traffic levels than the 2025 Fresno General Plan. Alt. 2 likely to lead to more congestion along Blackstone. Alt.4 likely to increase congestion along N. Golden State, N. Willow, and S. Clovis.
Degradation of Air Quality	same	same	less	same	Alt.3 likely to lead to substantially less air quality impacts, but the region would still not attain Federal Standards.
Increased Demand for Long Term Water Supplies	less	same	less	same	Alt.3 likely to lead to substantially less demand on long term water supplies.
Loss of Productive Agricultural Resources	less	less	less	same	Alts. 1 and 2 occupy smaller land area than the 2025 Fresno General Plan. Lower densities expected in Alt. 3.
Increased Demand for Utilities and Service Systems	less	same	less	same	Alts. 1 and 3 likely to lead to substantially less demands on public utilities.
Increased Demand for Public Services	less	same	less	more	Alts. 1 and 3 likely to lead to substantially less demands on public services. Alt. 4 likely to lead to more impacts, given increased land use intensities.
Increased Demand for Recreational Opportunities	less	same	less	same	Alts. 1 and 3 likely to lead to substantially less demands on recreation.
Loss of Biological Resources	less	less	less	same	Smaller geographic area disturbed under Alts. 1 and 2. Lower densities expected in Alt. 3.
Potential Disturbance of Cultural Resources	less	less	less	same	Smaller geographic area disturbed under Alts. 1 and 2. Lower densities expected in Alt. 2.
Generation of Noise	less	same	less	same	Generally, function of population, traffic levels.
Hydrology and Water Quality Concerns	less	same	less	same	Less impervious surfaces, leading to less runoff, under Alts. 1 and 3.
Geology and Soils Impacts	less	same	same	same	Smaller geographic area disturbed under Alt. 1.
Hazards and Potential Generation of Hazardous Materials	same	same	same	same	Systematically regulated by Federal, State, or local laws, independent of population size.
Increased Demand for Energy	same	same	same	same	Systematically regulated by Federal, State, or local laws, independent of population size.
Potential Loss of Mineral Resources	same	same	same	same	Systematically regulated by Federal, State, or local laws, independent of population size.
School Facilities	same	same	same	same	Systematically regulated by State law (SB 50), independent of population size.
Potential Aesthetic Impacts	same	same	same	same	Systematically regulated by local requirements, independent of population size.

more = Impacts are more adverse, compared to the Proposed 2025 Fresno General Plan.

less = Impacts are less adverse, compared to the Proposed 2025 Fresno General Plan.

same = Impacts are approximately the same as the Proposed 2025 Fresno General Plan.